

INTRODUCTION:

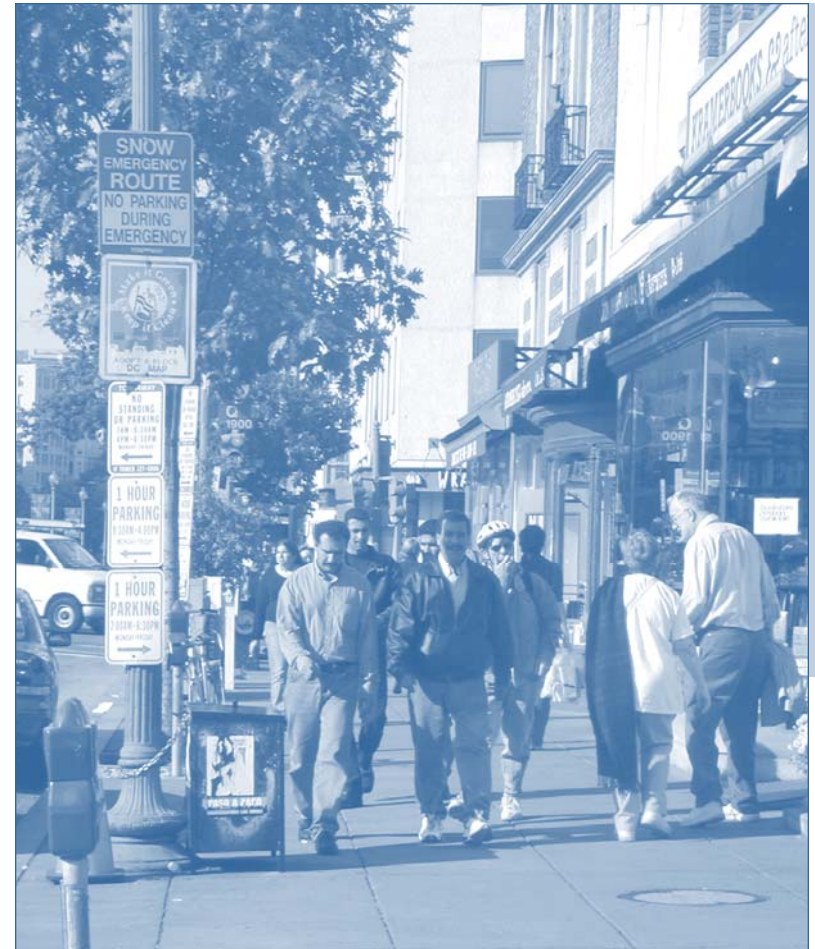
WHAT IS A TRANSIT-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER?



In October 2001, Mayor Anthony A. Williams convened a Mayor's Task Force on Transit-Oriented Development. The purpose of the Task Force was to: 1) evaluate the potential of transit-oriented development as a balanced growth strategy for the District of Columbia, 2) explore challenges and opportunities for TOD in the city, and 3) propose viable recommendations for implementation.

The Task Force represented a cross-section of stakeholders: residents, ANC Commissioners, activists, local and regional agencies, developers, market analysts, academics, and national government partners. In addition, focus groups met to test recommendations and provide input from specific groups including local neighborhood leaders, neighborhood business entrepreneurs, and local for-profit and not-for-profit developers.

Both the Task Force and focus groups agreed on a common idea: that areas around major transit resources offer a unique opportunity to create (or recreate) unique neighborhood centers that serve the needs of the District's neighborhood residents.



A vibrant pedestrian environment promotes neighborhood activity and a positive community identity.

Source: Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities

“Transit-Oriented Development in the District of Columbia is a land use strategy to accommodate new growth, strengthen neighborhoods, expand choices and opportunities by capitalizing on bus and rail assets to stimulate and support vibrant, compact, diverse and accessible neighborhood centers within an easy walk of transit.”

— Mayor’s Task Force on
Transit Oriented Development (2002)

WHAT IS A “TRANSIT-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER”?

As with other types of centers, transit-oriented centers are the nucleus of a neighborhood. Increased intensity of activity makes the center a dynamic place that draws community and visitors to socialize, shop, live and interact. The vitality of the center depends on the mix of activities and number of people using the area.

Neighborhood centers represent the distinctive character of the community and create a sense of place and source of pride to residents.

Whether entering the center by bus, train, bike, foot or car, the identity of the neighborhood is immediately recognizable and the traveler knows at once that they have arrived at a unique and dynamic place.

Unlike other centers, a transit-oriented center is organized around a transit resource that provides life and linkages to the center. Buildings, landscaping, and public space are all arranged to reinforce and orient activity toward the center and transit. The overall environment is safe and enjoyable and conducive to walking. While automobiles move through the center, the emphasis



Heavy commuter traffic can disturb the quality of life on neighborhood streets. Transit-oriented development is an important strategy to guide growth throughout the region.



BELTWAY BLUES: HOW REGIONAL TRAFFIC IMPACTS NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE

Lying at the center of the metropolitan region, District neighborhoods are acutely affected by regional transportation investment decisions. While discussions about adding freeway lanes in Fairfax County or building transit links across Prince George’s County seem to have nothing to do with life in District neighborhoods, in reality **THEY DO!**

Transportation decisions in adjacent jurisdictions affect everything from the economic success of neighborhood commercial areas to local environ-

mental health, from access to major employment centers to safety on neighborhood streets. For these reasons, District residents must participate in and help shape regional transportation investments.

is on pedestrians, bicycles, and transit as preferred modes of travel.

Washington, DC is different from many other places that have adopted TOD as a growth strategy in that both our neighborhoods and our transit system have been in place, in most cases, for over a generation. This condition means that, unlike newer cities or emerging suburban communities, reestablishing transit-oriented neighborhood centers must be accomplished through in-fill projects that adapt to and fit in with the existing community. TOD in Washington, DC, generally speaking, will not be implemented through wholesale change or redesign of a neighborhood. Instead the center will be created incrementally over time as individual development projects are introduced into the community around the transit area.

WHY TOD? WHY NOW?

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is not a new concept. In fact, many District neighborhoods were originally established around trolley lines. Neighborhoods like Tenleytown, Brookland, and Anacostia where DC's original TODs. Transit-oriented development has once again become an important planning strategy. The region is experiencing extremely rapid growth. While this growth has been positive for the regional economy, it has also brought a number of problems: escalating traffic congestion, dangerous regional air quality, polluted waterways, and growing demand for housing and services.

Linked to these regional trends, District neighborhoods have experienced tremendous pressures including neighborhood commercial areas struggling against suburban malls, heavy commuter traffic intruding onto neighborhood streets, environmental pollutants, childhood and senior health issues, and rising housing costs.

Today, market trends, regional conditions, and neighborhood concerns create an opportunity for a new strategy for regional growth. The district is pursuing a TOD policy for the District to achieve regional, municipal and neighborhood benefits including:



The ability to move around the city – to school, stores, and services – is important for all residents, particularly the very young or old who are unable to drive a private vehicle and rely on public transit.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Increased market demand for retail and other neighborhood amenities;
- Increased property values, tax base and economic strength;
- Protection of existing neighborhood character by focusing new development near transit;
- Improved access to jobs and shopping throughout the region.

AIR QUALITY AND TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS

- Reduced necessity for auto trips to access goods, services, and opportunities; therefore, reduced auto emissions;
- Reduced automobile commuter traffic on neighborhood streets;
- Opportunities for increased pedestrian, bicycle, transit activity, and car sharing.

Successful neighborhood centers provide benefits to all members of a community – young singles, families, professionals, and seniors of all income levels.

AFFORDABILITY

- Maximizing land resources for increased housing, employment, and retail opportunities;
- Increased housing opportunities for people at all income levels;
- Increased disposable income by decreasing transportation costs.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Decreased infrastructure costs for road maintenance and construction;
- Increased transit ridership;
- Efficient use of municipal investments;
- Increased return on transit investment.





Planned infill development for the old Wax Museum site at 5th & K Streets, NW includes over 100 units of affordable housing units in the heart of downtown.



Housing above shops (right) or with garden apartments (above) provides affordable rental options as well as income to property owners and an additional customer base for neighborhood businesses.

TRANSIT, AFFORDABILITY, AND OPPORTUNITY

Affordable housing is a critical concern in many District neighborhoods. Increased demand in the local housing market has led to rapidly rising housing and rent prices. Transit areas provide a unique opportunity to improve housing affordability.

The more intense focus at the core of a transit-area means that more housing units of various types and sizes can be provided allowing some to be offered at lower prices that maintains the diversity highly valued in many neighborhoods.

Residential development close to transit can lower both housing and development costs. Transit-accessible areas give households the option not to maintain a private automobile. According to the 2000 Census 37% of District households are without access to an automobile. Whether by choice or due to financial constraints, housing options close to transit means these households can still meet their employment and household needs without the significant expense of purchasing, maintaining, and fueling a private automobile.

Because access to transit gives residents the choice to save money by not owning a private car, this frees up the income that would have gone to car expenses to use in other ways—for example for better housing, education, or other expenses. Developments that encourage the use of transit and reduce the demand for private autos means developers have the opportunity to reduce parking that would otherwise drive up development costs (costs which are eventually transferred to the buyer).

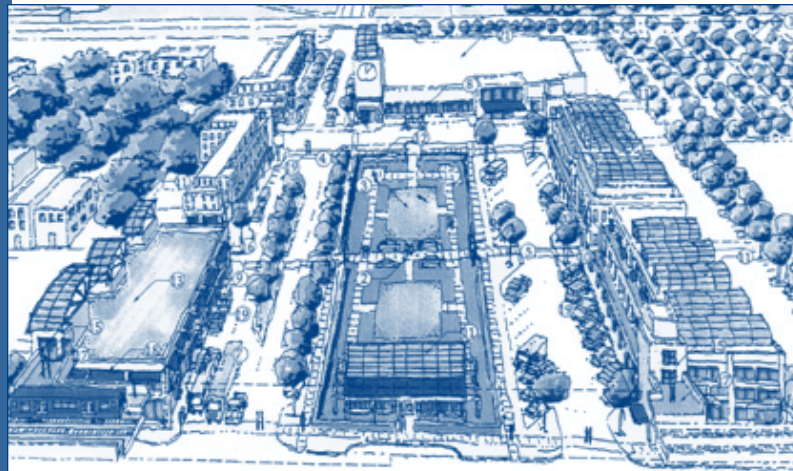
Finally, TOD allows for a variety of housing types such as apartments above stores, English basements, stacked row houses, condominiums, apartment houses, and traditional single family homes. Having more housing means more housing choice and the ability for residents to stay in the same neighborhood from youth through old age.

BETHEL NEW LIFE & WEST GARFIELD PARK

A struggling neighborhood in Chicago's west side was threatened with the removal of the deteriorating transit line that served their community. They organized and crafted a bold and ambitious plan to not only keep the line, but modernize it and use the transit area as a catalyst for the rebirth of their neighborhood.

Bethel New Life, a faith-based community development corporation operating in the West Garfield Park neighborhood of Chicago, led the charge. They proposed two major developments – construction of 50 new affordable market-rate homes and development of a mixed-use transit center that included shops, restaurants, a day care center and an employment office.

Organized and armed with a vision, the community approached the city. A partnership emerged between the community, the City of Chicago, the Transit Authority, and a private design firm. Thanks to local leadership, the neighborhood that grew up and developed around the transit line will soon thrive again because of it.



The planned transit center includes health services and extended-hour childcare right at the transit station. The design also includes a green roof.
Source: Farr Associates
Architecture and Urban Design

Project Highlights:

- Infill development in an existing neighborhood
- Starter housing for young families and senior housing
- 14,000 transit riders per week
- Affordable at \$25,000 median household income

Partners:

- Bethel New Life CDC
- West Garfield Park neighborhood
- Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Chicago Transit Authority
- City of Chicago
- Farr Associates

